

Bill banning sale of aborted fetal tissue heads to Senate

Jack Richards, Manship School News Service 2:48 p.m. CDT April 5, 2016



(Photo: GREG HILBURN/GANNETT LOUISIANA)

BATON ROUGE --- The Senate Judiciary Committee on criminal matters unanimously passed Senate Bill 33, criminalizing the sale and related handling of aborted baby organs or body parts. It now goes to the full Senate for consideration.

Sen. Ryan Gatti, R-Bossier City, said the bill is intended to fill a gap in the law about the sale of organs. "We don't want people benefiting financially from the parts of an aborted fetus. We could, in essence, create a cottage industry."

The bill would establish a fine of \$50,000 and a mandatory minimum prison sentence of 10 years without parole for those who "collect, harvest, sell, receive, or otherwise transfer or acquire" parts of aborted fetuses.

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Gatti said the bill needs to include all of those verbs because abortion providers may claim the payment is reimbursement for a storage fee.

"There's an incentive now, to have a mom sign a waiver for a donation when she has an abortion," Gatti said. "What (she will) do is change the document that the mom signs when she comes in"

Sen. Yvonne Colomb, D-Baton Rouge, questioned Gatti about whether the bill would criminalize a mother donating the stem cells or umbilical cord blood from her abortion.

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The committee eventually adopted an amendment from Colomb exempting stem cells and umbilical blood. Gatti went along with the amendment despite his personal belief that fetuses ought to be buried intact.

Committee members agreed the amended bill effectively addressed the market for baby parts without overburdening scientific research.

The issue of selling aborted fetuses came into the national spotlight when controversial videos, allegedly showing abortion providers nonchalantly discussing the prices of aborted fetal tissue over lunch. Gatti appeared to make reference the videos in his testimony, saying that unless the legislature passes his bill people may barter aborted organs "over eating a salad."

Two anti-abortion activists who worked on the videos were [indicted by a Texas grand jury \(/story/news/2016/01/25/planned-parenthood-videos-grand-jury-indictment/79318450/\)](/story/news/2016/01/25/planned-parenthood-videos-grand-jury-indictment/79318450/) on felony tampering with a federal document and misdemeanor "prohibition of the purchase and sale of human organs," as a result of their alleged attempts to purchase fetal tissue organs while filming undercover.

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